

The Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad first began construction of a line in Utah beginning in about 1880. That line was run west out of Grand Junction, Colorado, across the base of the Book Cliffs to Green River, then northwest to Price, and finally up Price Canyon to Soldier Summit and down Spanish Fork Canyon to intersect the Utah Southern at Springville. It was completed on March 30, 1883.

Much later in history the **Heber Creeper** was begun. In 1898, the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad extended a line from Provo, into Provo Canyon to as far as Upper Falls, just beyond Bridal Veil. It was primarily an excursion or recreation railway line, as there were no mines or any other reason for it to be in Provo Canyon.

The next big step toward completing this line was in 1899. That's when the **Utah Eastern Railway Company**, headquartered in Salt Lake City, opened a line from Upper Falls to the town of Heber. The grading for the line began on March 20, 1899, the laying of tracks began on April 24, 1899, and construction ended on September 22, 1899. It was described in the local Heber newspaper known as the *Wasatch Wave*. Here is how they reported the event.

RAILROAD COMPLETED FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1899.

The Provo Canyon branch of the Rio Grande Western Railroad which connects Heber City with Provo is now completed and ready for business. The length of the road is 25.8 miles[41 kms]. There are seven stations on the line between Provo and Heber. Their names and their distances from Provo are as follows: Smooth, one mile[1.6 kms]; Crahurst, six miles[10 kms]; Nunn's, nine miles[14.5 kms]; Falls, ten miles[16 kms]; Forks[Vivian Park], twelve miles[19 kms]; Wallsburg, eighteen miles[29 kms]; Charleston, twenty-one miles[34 kms]. None of these stations will have an agent. E. W. Sullivan has been appointed agent at Heber. He comes well recommended, having been in the employ of the company for a number of years.

Elsewhere in this issue will be found the time table showing the arrival and departure of trains. This schedule is very satisfactory indeed. The trains connect at Provo with the fast-continental trains both east and west without any of those long, tiresome waits. If you have business in Salt Lake you can take the 6:40 am train—arrive in the City 10:00 o'clock; returning you can leave Salt Lake at 5 o'clock pm and reach Heber at 8:05. This gives you seven hours in the metropolis, and the whole of the business day in the city which is from 10 o'clock to 5. On the other hand our Salt Lake friends can leave there at 8 am, reach Heber at 11:10 am, spend 3 1/2 hours in Heber and leave at 2:20, arriving in Salt Lake at 5:35 in the evening.

In the book on Wasatch County history entitled, *How Beautiful Upon the Mountains*, it states; *The*



Inside one of the railway cars of the Heber Creeper.

community leaders were sufficiently moved by the significance of the occasion that they planned a special railroad holiday on Friday, October 6, 1899 and invited people from all over the state to attend.

The railroad company set up a special train of seven cars which arrived in Heber at 3 pm, carrying many state dignitaries, including Governor J. T. Hammond, Provo City officials and some 400 persons.

Residents of Heber and Wasatch County along with the Heber Brass Band met the train and its passengers at the depot and proceeded to the court house yard where a special platform had been erected.

Here a special program began with an address of welcome by Abram Hatch, stake president[*a* Mormon church leader]. Mayor Jones of Provo made a brief response and each of the state officials present spoke for a few minutes. These included Gov. Hammond, James Chipman, state treasurer; Morgan Richards, Jr., J.J. Thomas, secretary of the state board of equalization and U.S. Senator Reed Smoot. Numerous railway officials and officers of Provo City were also honored. Music was furnished by quartets from Heber and Provo and by the Heber Brass Band.

After the program the large crowd adjourned to Heber Social Hall where they were served free food between 4 and 7 pm. A dance in Turner's Hall during the evening concluded the festivities. The special train left Heber shortly after 10 pm and arrived in Provo at 12:30 am.

Another comment quoted directly from the Wasatch Wave stated: All seemed to enjoy themselves during the afternoon and evening, and we believe the visitors went home feeling that they had been well treated by the people of Heber and having a somewhat warmer feeling toward us than they formerly had.

The Wasatch County history book goes on to mention something about one of the new businesses which sprung up in the Heber Valley. The coming of the railroad gave rise to a number of related businesses, including "Hack" service. Frank Carlile of the Heber Livery Stable was one of the most reliable drivers of the time. He met all the trains leaving town or arriving. Often his hack was so loaded with townspeople, traveling salesmen or other travelers that two or three had to stand on the step at the rear of the buggy. His reputation was for reliability, and people knew they could always catch their train if they rode with Frank Carlile.

On August 1, 1908, the entire line from Provo to Heber was consolidated into the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway Company. Utah Eastern Railroad engineers had planned to run the line from Heber over the Wolf Creek Pass to the east into the Uinta Basin and on to Colorado, but those plans never materialized.

In the early years of the Provo Canyon railway, which eventually became known as the Heber Creeper, there was both passenger service and freight hauling, but gradually things changed. In the



Passengers boarding one of the cars at the Heber Creeper Station.

